

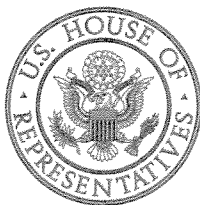
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CONGRESSMAN ED CASE
2ND DISTRICT, HAWAII

ISLANDS OF HAWAII, MAUI, KAHOLAWE, LANAI,
MOLOKA'I, O'AHU (WINDWARD, NORTH SHORE,
CENTRAL, LEEWARD), KAUAI AND NI'HAU,
AND NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

July 2006

COMMITTEES:

BUDGET

AGRICULTURE

LIVESTOCK AND HORTICULTURE
(RANKING MEMBER)

CONSERVATION, CREDIT,
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

SMALL BUSINESS

TAX, FINANCE AND EXPORTS

REGULATORY REFORM
AND OVERSIGHT

RURAL ENTERPRISES, AGRICULTURE
AND TECHNOLOGY

2006 FILIPINO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY REPORT

Dear Friends:

Since 2002, I have been honored to represent more Filipino-Americans in our U.S. House of Representatives than any of my 439 House colleagues. With this responsibility, I have joined like-minded members of Congress in advocating for the interests of almost 2.4 million Filipino-Americans nationwide, one of our nation's fastest-growing ethnic groups in both numbers and influence.

As you know so well, these are incredibly exciting times for Filipino-Americans everywhere. This year we celebrate the centennial of sustained immigration from the Philippines to our country and, with it, the rich culture and history of Filipino-Americans. But beyond this great event, we are also realizing the fruits of the sacrifices made by your predecessors in both our Hawaii and throughout our country.

Yet these successes are matched by many remaining challenges. Of course, Filipino-Americans seek the same goals as all other Americans: good jobs, education and housing; adequate and affordable health care; safety and security for our families and communities; equality of treatment and opportunity for our children; full participation in our government; and a strong country and peaceful world. I remain committed to these goals on behalf of all of my constituents. But there are also many issues that affect Filipino-Americans more than most Americans, like immigration, and our country's relationship with the Asia-Pacific region and specifically with the Republic of the Philippines.

This is another of my reports to our Hawaii's Filipino-American community, and has three purposes. The first is to let you know what I've been doing in Congress to address specific Filipino-American needs. The second is to make you aware of other important issues or events in the Filipino-American community. And the third is to let you know what my congressional office can and wants to do for you and how you can get in touch.

I say to all my colleagues, and feel deeply, that I represent the best state and district in our country, in large part because I am fortunate to represent a constituency of such rich cultural diversity. Our Filipino-American community is a vital part of our Hawaii's fabric and future, and I am truly thankful for the privilege of being your Congressman. Both I and my staff, including three Filipino-Americans, welcome the opportunity to be of further service to you and yours.

With deep aloha,

Ed Case

A. Selected National Filipino-American Issues

1. 2006 Centennial of Filipino Immigration

Sustained immigration from the Philippines to our country (specifically to Hawaii) began in 1906 with arrival of the first sakada. The one hundredth anniversary of that event has given us all a wonderful opportunity to celebrate not only a century of achievement for Filipino-Americans, but also the continuing promise of the American dream.

As part of this effort, I introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives a resolution (H.Con.Res. 218) calling for Congress to formally recognize the centennial, acknowledge the achievements of our Filipino-Americans, and express continued support for the longstanding ties between our country and the Philippines. H.Con.Res. 218, which had 59 cosponsors, passed the U.S. House on December 13, 2005, and the U.S. Senate on December 15. Copies of my resolution and House floor passage statement are attached for your review. Information about centennial celebration events in both Hawaii and across our country is contained in other sections of this report.

2. U.S.-Philippines Congressional Caucus

Our country has a long and proud history with the Republic of the Philippines, which like any relationship must be nurtured through constant attention. This relationship, together with the needs of our growing Filipino-American community, presents your Congress with many related issues in our foreign and domestic policy.

In addressing these issues and advocating for good decisions, I seek to act collectively with my colleagues in Congress who share my concerns and goals. This is why we formed the U.S.-Philippines Congressional Caucus back in early 2003. The members of this caucus all share a common interest in the U.S.-Philippines relationship and in our Filipino-American communities. Currently, there are 57 U.S. Representatives who represent at least 10,000 Filipino-Americans each. Together we have been able to bring our collective influence to bear on common concerns such as benefits for Filipino veterans and the strengthening of the relationship between our country and the Philippines. We work closely with the Filipino-American community across the country, as well as with the Embassy of the Philippines and the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. and the Consul General of the Philippines in Hawaii. To contact the Consulate, please call (808) 595-6316 or e-mail honoluluipc@hawaii.rr.com.

3. Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus

Filipino-Americans are a vital and growing part of a broader community of Americans of Asian and Pacific American ancestry, all of whom share common concerns. I have served since 2003 on the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), a group of like-minded members of Congress addressing APA concerns, and am currently Whip (third-ranking member). These issues include civil rights, affirmative action, hate crimes, educational and health parity, family reunification and decreasing our backlog in immigration, and greater employment, economic development, and business opportunities for APAs, particularly with our federal government. For further information on CAPAC, please go to <http://www.honda.house.gov/CAPACHome.shtml>. For specific resource information on internships and scholarship opportunities for Asian Pacific Americans, please go to <http://www.honda.house.gov/CAPACresources.shtml>.

4. World War II Filipino Veterans

We are all only too well aware of the travesty of our country's actions in 1946 in going back on our word to provide citizenship and veterans benefits to Filipino troops who fought alongside ours in World War II. For this reason, one of my first efforts in the 108th Congress (2003-2004) was to join my colleagues in introducing legislation to finally and fully honor our commitment.

Although a measure of success was obtained in that Congress, it still left too many veterans short of our full promise. Thus, in the current 109th Congress (2005-2006), I have again joined with many colleagues in introducing and advocating for H.R. 4574, our Filipino Veterans' Equity Act, to finish the job. As we all know very well, time is of the essence as our WWII veterans increasingly live out their lives without complete justice. This remains one of my top priorities for our Filipino-American community.

5. Immigration Priority to Families of Filipino WWII Vets

While our Filipino WWII vets gained at least the option of citizenship in 1990, their sons and daughters did not also obtain the right of citizenship or even any special immigration status. With the immigration waiting period from the Philippines now well over ten years in many cases, this has led to the additional injustice of our vets living in our country as full citizens while their own children may not.

I became aware of this injustice through meetings with our vets and spouses on my first election to Congress in 2002. I therefore introduced H.R. 3587, a bill to give immigration preference to the children of our Filipino World War II veterans, in the 108th Congress. I reintroduced the bill (H.R. 901) in the current 109th Congress and have been advocating for its passage.

A possible avenue has arisen as part of Congress' consideration of immigration reform. When the U.S. House version did not provide reasonable opportunities for inclusion, I wrote to Senators Inouye and Akaka on May 11, 2006, advising them of this issue and asking that they work toward inclusion in Senate debate, which they accomplished. I also sent similar letters to President Bush and Congressional leaders. Enclosed please find my letters to Senators Inouye and Akaka and President Bush. I continue to work toward inclusion of my initiative in any comprehensive immigration reform bill in the current Congress.

6. Compassionate Visitor Visa Act

One of the principal concerns of our Filipino-American community nationwide is to facilitate immigration of family and friends from the Philippines to the United States. This interest is reflected in this statistic: of all foreign-born U.S. citizens living in Hawaii (about 18% of Hawaii's total population), fully 48% were born in the Philippines and emigrated after birth.

As we are all aware, immigration has become substantially more difficult in recent years, especially after 9/11 turned immigration into a largely homeland security-driven process. This is why a principal service of my office is to assist our Filipino-American community with individual immigration concerns (see below.)

One severe consequence of our overall immigration policy, especially post-9/11, has been the increased denial of temporary visas to Filipino citizens for visits to our country for emergency or humanitarian reasons. The most tragic cases I have worked on are where our consular office in the Philippines has

turned down visas for family members to say goodbye to a terminally ill U.S. citizen in Hawaii, or for a family member to come here to donate an organ to another family member who is a U.S. citizen.

The reason for these denials is that U.S. law establishes a heavy burden on an applicant for a temporary visa to prove that he or she will not default on the visa and will instead return to the Philippines before the visa period expires. This is an impossible burden to meet for many Philippines citizens, especially those without property or a sizable bank account or families.

However, the consequences are especially severe when the visa is sought for family emergency or humanitarian reasons. This is why I introduced in the 108th and 109th Congresses my Compassionate Visitor Visa Act (currently H.R. 900), which removes the presumption against an applicant seeking to visit the U.S. for a true emergency or humanitarian purpose. I enclose a copy of my remarks on introduction, and have asked the committee of jurisdiction to advance this long-overdue bill.

The current administration and some in Congress have been reluctant to change the law itself. However, my efforts have highlighted this issue and caused the administration to process visa requests in humanitarian situations which may not have been approved previously.

7. Humanitarian Parole

Closely related to my compassionate visitor visa effort, I have identified a little-known existing program of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), referred to as "humanitarian parole," under which temporary visas may be issued under "extraordinary circumstances" to "bring an otherwise inadmissible alien into the United States due to a compelling emergency." Of the very small number of applications under this program, the approval rate is generally only 20%. I have continued to follow up with DHS to assure that (a) applicants with especially severe circumstances are at least made aware of this option, and (b) the program is fully and fairly applied to applicants from the Philippines. I am also pleased that, since initiation of my efforts, we have in fact succeeded in obtaining issuance of visas in truly humanitarian situations in Hawaii. Enclosed please find information on the humanitarian parole program. You can also find further information at <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/services/humanparole/index.htm>.

8. Minority Small Business Opportunities and Challenges

Of course, our Filipino-American community is a very strong small business community. There are many federal efforts of assistance to our nation's small businesses generally and APA small businesses specifically, ranging from minority small business preferences to federal government procurement opportunities.

As a member throughout my tenure in Congress of the House Committee on Small Business and otherwise, I have dedicated my efforts to assisting our nation's small businesses with general concerns like excessive taxation, regulation and paperwork. I have also introduced and worked on initiatives to enforce and expand minority set-aside and procurement programs.

I continue to work on these efforts on behalf of small business generally and APA and Filipino-American small businesses specifically. Please call my office for information or assistance. You can also contact the following federal agencies directly:

- Small Business Administration (<http://www.sba.gov/hi>) (808) 541-2990. (General small business assistance; also the 8(a) Business Development Program, which helps small disadvantaged businesses.)
- Small Business Development Center in Hilo (<http://www.hawaii-sbdc.org>) (808) 974-7515. (Assistance with starting and growing a small business.)
- Department of Commerce, Minority Business Development Agency (<http://www.mbda.gov>). Hawaii Minority Business Development Center (<http://www.honolulu-mbdc.org>) (808) 956-0850. (Assistance to minority-owned businesses.)
- Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (<http://www.eda.gov>) (808) 541-3391. (General economic development assistance.)
- Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Offices (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>) Hilo: (808) 933-8330; Honolulu: (808) 541-2600, x 104; Lihue: (808) 245-9014; Wailuku: (808) 244-3100; Kealahou: (808) 322-2484 x 194; Kaunakakai: (808) 553-5321. (Assistance to small businesses in rural communities.)

9. Repatriation of the Bells of Balangiga

One important ongoing issue in U.S.-Philippine relations is the repatriation of the Bells of Balangiga. These are a pair of brass church bells from the town of Balangiga in Samar, Philippines. They were taken by the United States military over one hundred years ago as war trophies following clashes between Filipinos and Americans in the Philippine-American War. The bells are currently located in Cheyenne, Wyoming at F.E. Warren Air Force Base.

The Bells of Balangiga are an extremely sensitive issue. To veterans in Wyoming and nationally, the bells are enshrined in memory of the American dead. To Filipinos and Filipino-Americans, the Bells of Balangiga represent the fight for independence and are viewed in much the same way as Americans view the Liberty Bell.

Philippine government and Catholic Church officials have repeatedly requested that the U.S. government return the bells to Balangiga, but they have met resistance from a handful of veterans and a few members of Congress. Our governments have discussed a compromise involving the creation of two replicas and the repatriation of a single bell to Balangiga along with one of the replicas. I have joined Congressman Bob Filner in reintroducing H.Res. 313, a resolution to accomplish this compromise objective. It is my hope that this nagging controversy can be resolved and that U.S.-Philippine relations can be further strengthened with the resolution's passage. Enclosed please find a copy of H.Res. 313.

B. Filipino-American Centennial Event Information

1. Hawaii Filipino Centennial Celebration

The one hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Filipinos in Hawaii is being celebrated in our islands with a number of events throughout the year. The planning and coordination of these centennial celebrations is a huge undertaking. Toward this end, the Hawaii State Legislature passed Act 159 establishing a commission to oversee the centennial celebrations. The Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission,

chaired by Elias Beniga, has overseen the organization of some 75 events statewide. I have been pleased to serve as a member of the Commission's advisory committee, and have been honored to participate in many of the events.

Over 15 events are planned for the month of August alone. For a complete list of centennial events and other information on the centennial in Hawaii, please see the Hawaii Filipino Centennial Celebration website at <http://www.filipinosinhawaii100.org>.

2. Smithsonian Filipino-American Centennial Commemoration

Centennial celebrations are also being held throughout our nation in 2006. The Smithsonian Institution, our country's national museum in Washington D.C., is commemorating the Filipino-American centennial with a whole range of national events. I am pleased to serve on the Smithsonian commemoration's honorary council, to have participated in its commencement event, and to be actively working with both federal and state efforts to assure a centennial truly worthy of this accomplishment.

For more information on the Smithsonian's activities, please see its website at <http://www.apa.si.edu/filamcentennial>.

To learn more about Filipino-American history and culture, please visit The Filipino American Story official website at http://www.apa.si.edu/filamcentennial/filam_story/index.html.

C. Your Congressional Office

1. Office Mission and Resources

My overall job is to represent the people of my district and our Hawaii in our federal government. That means being your voice on the great issues of our day, listening to your concerns, letting you know what your government is doing, and helping you on your individual problems whenever and however I can.

I have a full-service congressional office in Washington, D.C. and throughout my Hawaii district to assist me in performing my duties. More information on my office and activities and opportunities can be found on my website at <http://www.house.gov/case>.

I want you to know specifically about three of my staff who are Filipino-American and who work a great deal with our Filipino-American community. Jackie Conant, whose heritage lies in Ilocos Norte, is one of my Hawaii caseworkers, specializing in immigration; she can be reached at (808) 541-1986 or else at jacqueline.conant@mail.house.gov. Zeny Muyot, whose heritage lies in Pasay City/Metro Manila, is my Hawaii community liaison with a focus on our Filipino-American community; she can be reached at the same number or else at zeny.muyot@mail.house.gov. And Darrell Villaruz, whose heritage lies in Ilocos Sur, is one of my legislative assistants in my Washington, D.C. office specializing in health, education, welfare, labor, transportation, Social Security, Medicare, seniors and civil service; he can be reached at (202) 225-4906 or else at darrell.villaruz@mail.house.gov.

2. Focus: Immigration Casework

"Casework" refers to my obligation and desire to assist you with your individual concerns, especially those involving our federal government. We've helped thousands of constituents with such concerns, ranging from Social Security and veterans benefits to requests for information on federal records. You name it, we've probably helped on a request like it.

But my largest amount of casework by far relates to individual immigration concerns and specifically immigration from the Philippines. We've helped many with temporary visa issues to permanent immigration concerns. Jackie Conant is my immigration casework specialist, and I especially urge you to contact her with any individual immigration problems.

3. Contact Information

This is how you can contact my office or me generally:

Washington Office

115 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-4906
Fax: (202) 225-4987

Hawaii Office

5104 Prince Kuhio Federal Building
Honolulu, HI 96850
Phone: (808) 541-1986
Fax: (808) 538-0233

Neighbor Island Toll Free Numbers

Hawaii Island: 935-3756
Kauai/Niihau: 245-1951
Maui: 242-1818
Lanai: 565-7199
Molokai: 552-0160

E-mail: ed.case@mail.house.gov

4. Your Issues

I'd very much like you to contact me with any thoughts, questions, comments or concerns facing you and your organizations. Also, please feel free to contact any of my staff at either (202) 225-4906 or (808) 541-1986, or by e-mail directly at ed.case@mail.house.gov. My staff's contact information and a list of their issue areas can be found at <http://www.house.gov/case/staff.html>.

5. Signup for Congressional E-mail Newsletter

I use an e-newsletter to provide frequent updates about what's happening in Washington D.C. as well as the 2nd Congressional District and to ask for input. If you haven't signed up and would like to receive these e-mails, please log onto my website at http://www.house.gov/case/email_list.html, or you can call or e-mail at the above contacts to be put on our list. I may occasionally ask you to fill out electronic surveys, but I will never release your contact information to anyone else. If you have already signed up, thank you; you do not need to submit your name again.

6. Federal Grants and Resources

I receive many questions and requests for information regarding federal grants and other assistance. You can go to my website for information on such grants and resources and other aspects of our federal government. There, for example, you will find contact information for federal offices in Hawaii, resources compiled by the Congressional Research Service, and a link to the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (<http://www.cfda.gov>). This Catalog includes a listing of about 1,500 federal grant and assistance programs and includes a useful search engine.

7. Arranging a Meeting or Event or Providing Congressional Messages

I truly welcome opportunities to meet personally, discuss issues of mutual concern, and address groups on issues of our day. I also greatly enjoy opportunities to join you at community events or, if I can't make it, to provide a congratulatory or recognition message on special occasions. Please contact Roberta Weatherford in my Honolulu office at (808) 541-1986 or by e-mail at roberta.weatherford@mail.house.gov.

D. This Report Online

For your convenience and potential use, I have placed a copy of this report online under the newsletter section of my website at <http://www.house.gov/case/newsletter.html>.